
II. English Language Arts, Reading Comprehension, Grade 3

Grade 3 English Language Arts

Reading Comprehension Test

The spring 2010 grade 3 MCAS English Language Arts Reading Comprehension test was based on learning standards in the two content strands of the Massachusetts *English Language Arts Curriculum Framework* (2001) listed below. Specific learning standards for grade 3 are found in the *Supplement to the Massachusetts English Language Arts Curriculum Framework* (2004). Page numbers for the learning standards appear in parentheses.

- Language (*Framework*, pages 19–26; *Supplement*, pages 6–7)
- Reading and Literature (*Framework*, pages 35–64; *Supplement*, pages 7–9)

The *English Language Arts Curriculum Framework* and *Supplement* are available on the Department website at www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/current.html.

In test item analysis reports and on the Subject Area Subscore pages of the MCAS *School Reports* and *District Reports*, ELA Reading Comprehension test results are reported under two MCAS reporting categories: **Language** and **Reading and Literature**, which are identical to the two framework content strands listed above.

Test Sessions and Content Overview

The MCAS grade 3 ELA Reading Comprehension test included two separate test sessions. Each session included reading passages, followed by multiple-choice, short-response, and/or open-response questions. Selected common reading passages and approximately half of the common test items are shown on the following pages as they appeared in grade 3 test & answer booklets.

Reference Materials and Tools

The use of bilingual word-to-word dictionaries was allowed for current and former limited English proficient students only, during both ELA Reading Comprehension test sessions. No other reference materials were allowed during any ELA Reading Comprehension test session.

Cross-Reference Information

The tables at the conclusion of this chapter indicate each released and unreleased common item's reporting category and the framework general standard it assesses. The correct answers for released multiple-choice questions are also displayed in the released item table.

English Language Arts

READING COMPREHENSION

DIRECTIONS

This session contains two reading selections with sixteen multiple-choice questions, one short-response question, and one open-response question. For multiple-choice questions, mark your answers by filling in the circle next to the best answer. For short-response and open-response questions, write your answer in the space below the question.

As a child, George Washington Carver was a slave who belonged to Moses and Susan Carver. He grew up during a time when African American children did not have the same opportunities as everyone else, but he still found a way to go to school and become a successful scientist. Read the article to find out more about George Washington Carver's life and answer the questions that follow.

George Washington Carver

the peanut scientist

Born 1864 (?) – January 5, 1943

by Patricia and Fredrick McKissack

Why? and How?

- 1 **W**hen George was about twelve years old, he left the Carvers. He wanted to go to school. He walked to Neosho, Missouri. A family found George sleeping in their barn. They let the boy live with them. George worked and went to Lincoln School.
- 2 A few years passed. George learned all he could at Lincoln. He heard about a school in Fort Scott, Kansas. So he moved there. Another family let George live with them. Soon, young Carver was old enough to live on his own. For a while he moved from place to place.
- 3 Then he came to a small Kansas town. Another man named George Carver lived there. So George added a “W” to his name. “It is for Washington,” he told his friends. *George Washington Carver*—he liked the sound of his new name.
- 4 George wanted to go to college. Not many black men went to college in the 1890s. But George Carver was sure that he would go. He worked hard and saved his money.

Reading Comprehension

- 5 At last Carver went to college in Iowa. There he studied what he liked best—plants and farming. Then he went to Iowa State College in Ames to study. He graduated in 1896. Still, there was much more he wanted to learn.
- 6 George Washington Carver would spend the rest of his life asking questions and looking for the answers. He was a scientist. And scientists are always asking Why? and How?

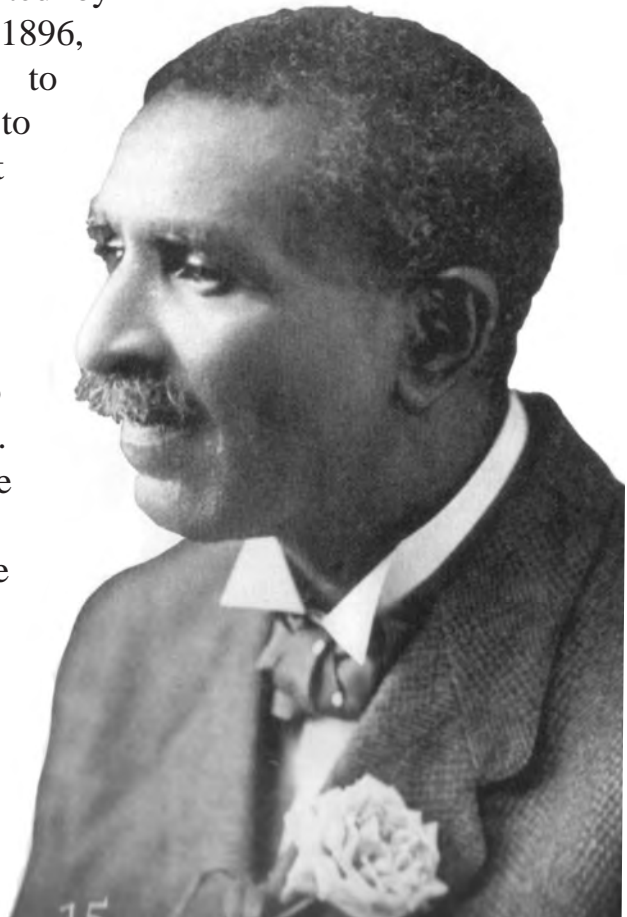
Tuskegee Farm

- 7 **G**eorge Carver was asked to stay at Iowa State and teach. But Booker T. Washington asked Professor Carver to come teach at Tuskegee Institute in Alabama.

- 8 The all-black school was started by Booker T. Washington in 1881. In 1896, Mr. Washington wrote a letter to Professor Carver: “Will you come to Tuskegee to teach?” Carver thought about it. Then he answered: “I am coming.”

- 9 It was fall 1896 when Professor Carver went to Tuskegee. He had thirteen students. His job was to teach science. But he had no lab. This didn’t stop him. The class made a lab from things they found.

- 10 The school also had a farm. The soil was poor. The cotton plants were small and weak. Farmers in the South had been growing cotton on the land for many years. Professor Carver said, “The soil needs a rest.” He and the class did a project. “We will not plant cotton,” he said. “We will plant sweet potatoes.” And they did.



Professor Carver said that learning skills like farming was “the key to unlock the golden door of freedom” for African Americans.

Reading Comprehension

11 The next year they grew cowpeas, another kind of vegetable. “The land has to rest,” he said. So the third year they grew cotton again. That cotton crop grew bigger and stronger than before. Carver was one of the first scientists to teach crop rotation—growing different plants to make the soil better.

12 The boll weevil is a bug that eats cotton plants. In the early 1900s, boll weevils came into the United States from Mexico. Farmers were worried. What could they do? Carver told them to plant goobers! Boll weevils don’t like goobers.



Plant Goobers!

13 **G**oobers!
14 *Goober* is an old African name for peanut. Slaves brought goobers from Africa. They grew them in small gardens. Goobers were mostly used to feed animals.

15 Farmers came to Tuskegee from all over the South. Professor Carver told them about his work. What can be done with peanuts? They are only good for hogs, people said. Carver found many ways to use peanuts. His students liked peanut butter best.

16 Who will buy the peanuts? Professor Carver didn’t know. But, as always, he kept looking for answers.

17 Then an idea came. The quiet professor asked a group of important businessmen to have dinner with him. He served them bread, soup, meat, cookies, and ice cream.

18 They all agreed that the food was good—very good. Then Professor Carver told them: Everything they had eaten had been made with peanuts! What a surprise!

Reading Comprehension

- 19 Professor Carver was full of more surprises. He showed the businessmen what they could make from the peanuts. He showed them why they should buy the farmers' peanut crops. What he said made sense. Now the farmers could sell their crops.
- 20 It is no surprise that George Washington Carver was called the farmer's best friend.

George Washington Carver: The Peanut Scientist by Patricia and Fredrick McKissack. Copyright © 2002 by Enslow Publishers, Inc. Reprinted by permission of Enslow Publishers, Inc. Photograph reprinted by permission of the State Historical Society of Missouri, Columbia.

Mark your choices for multiple-choice questions 1 through 10 by filling in the circle next to the best answer.

- 1 Based on the article, what was the **main** reason Carver moved from place to place while he was young?

- Ⓐ He wanted to meet new people.
- Ⓑ He wanted to visit bigger towns.
- Ⓒ He wanted to find better schools.
- Ⓓ He wanted to see different farms.

- 2 According to the article, what was the **main** reason Carver chose to give himself a middle name?

- Ⓐ to make himself seem like an average student
- Ⓑ to make himself seem like an important scientist
- Ⓒ to show respect for a president with the same name
- Ⓓ to be different from a person in town with the same name

Reading Comprehension

3 According to the article, why did Carver move to Alabama?

- Ⓐ to take a job as a professor
- Ⓑ to find better crops to plant
- Ⓒ to take more farming classes
- Ⓓ to find new uses for the peanut

4 Based on paragraph 10, Carver decided to try crop rotation because

- Ⓐ he worried that cotton would not be easy to sell.
- Ⓑ he noticed that the cotton plants were not healthy.
- Ⓒ he saw that the cotton seeds cost too much money.
- Ⓓ he thought that cotton would take too long to grow.

5 Based on paragraph 10, how did Carver help the soil rest and get better?

- Ⓐ by adding insects to the soil
- Ⓑ by giving more water to the soil
- Ⓒ by planting vegetables in the soil
- Ⓓ by planting more cotton in the soil

6 Based on the article, people were not eating peanuts because they thought peanuts were

- Ⓐ hard to find.
- Ⓑ just for animals.
- Ⓒ difficult to plant.
- Ⓓ just like cowpeas.

Reading Comprehension

- 7 Based on the article, why was Carver called the “farmer’s best friend”?

- Ⓐ He visited with many farmers.
- Ⓑ He went to school to be a farmer.
- Ⓒ He invited farmers to his college.
- Ⓓ He showed farmers better ways to grow crops.

- 8 Which of the following questions is answered in the section titled “Plant Goobers!”?

- Ⓐ Why should farmers plant peanuts?
- Ⓑ How should farmers plant peanuts?
- Ⓒ When should farmers plant peanuts?
- Ⓓ Where should farmers plant peanuts?

- 9 Read the sentence from paragraph 3 in the box below.

Then he came to a small Kansas town.

Which of the following words from the sentence is an **adjective**?

- Ⓐ he
- Ⓑ came
- Ⓒ small
- Ⓓ town

- 10 Read the words from the article in the box below.

- Fort Scott
- George Carver
- Iowa State College
- Tuskegee Institute

What do the words in the box have in common?

- Ⓐ They are verbs.
- Ⓑ They are adjectives.
- Ⓒ They are proper nouns.
- Ⓓ They are compound words.

Reading Comprehension

Question 11 is an open-response question.

- **Read the question carefully.**
- **Explain your answer.**
- **Add supporting details.**
- **Double-check your work.**

Write your answer to question 11 in the lined space below.

11 Based on the article, explain why George Washington Carver is famous. Support your answer with important information from the article.

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal red ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins or other markings on the paper.

Reading Comprehension

Read this folktale and answer the questions that follow.

The Billy Goat and the Vegetable Garden

retold by Lucía M. González

1 Once there was a very old woman and a very old man who lived on a farm. They shared a vegetable garden in which they grew tomatoes, lettuce, peppers, potatoes, beans, and plantains. They spent hours working in their garden and planning all the delicious dishes they were going to make with their vegetables.

2 One morning, a billy goat came into their garden and began eating up all the vegetables.

3 “Look!” cried the little old woman. “That billy goat is going to eat up everything in our garden. What shall we do?”

4 “Don’t worry,” said the little old man. “I can make him go away if I speak to him very, very nicely.”

5 So he went down to the field where the billy goat was eating and he patted it on its back. “*Buenos dias*, Señor Billy Goat,” he said. “Good morning. Please do not eat up our garden. You are so young and strong, and we are so old and weak. Surely you can find food somewhere else. Please go away.”

6 But before the old man finished talking, the rude Señor Billy Goat’s legs swung up in the air and his head bent low. Then he turned and charged at the old man with his horns!

7 “¡Ay, *Mujer*!* ¡*Mujer*!” the old man cried out to his wife, running up the hill as fast as he could. “Open the door, please! The billy goat is after me!”



* *Mujer* — wife

Reading Comprehension

8 The little old man ran inside the house, shut the door, and began to cry.

...

9 Then suddenly, something tickled the little old man's ear. He shook his head to get rid of it and, as he did, down dropped a little red ant.

10 "I have come to help you," said the little ant. "I can make Señor Billy Goat go away from your garden."

11 "You?" cried the little old woman. "You are so small, what can you do? How can you help us?"

12 "Just watch me," said the ant. "You are being too nice to that bully. I can speak to him in the only language he understands."

13 And with that, the little ant crawled out of the house, through the field, and over to the billy goat. The goat didn't even see the little ant as he crawled up his hind leg, across his back, straight up to his ear — and stung him!

14 "¡Ay!" cried the billy goat.

15 The little ant now crawled to the other ear and stung him.

16 "¡Ay!" cried the billy goat again.

17 Then the little ant crawled up his back and down again — stinging him all over as he crawled along!

18 "¡Ay, ay, ay, ay, ay!" the billy goat cried. "I have stepped in an anthill! If I don't get out of this garden at once, these ants will eat me alive!"

19 Quickly, he jumped up into the air and ran out of the garden as fast as he could.

20 The little old man and the little old woman gave many thanks to that brave and clever little red ant for saving their vegetable garden, and they always made sure he had plenty to eat. They spent many hours that fall harvesting their beautiful ripe vegetables and talking about the delicious dishes they were going to prepare.

21 And what about that billy goat? Well, for all anyone knows, he hasn't gone near that vegetable garden to this very day!



"The Billy Goat and the Vegetable Garden" retold by Lucía M. González, from *Señor Cat's Romance and Other Favorite Stories from Latin America*. Text copyright © 1997 by Lucía M. González. Illustrations copyright © 1997 by Lulu Delacre. Reprinted by permission of Scholastic Inc.

Reading Comprehension

Mark your choices for multiple-choice questions 12 through 17 by filling in the circle next to the best answer.

- 12 Based on paragraphs 7 and 8, what is the **most likely** reason the old man is crying?

(A) He is tired of his garden.
(B) He is angry with his wife.
(C) He is upset about the goat.
(D) He is worried about the ant.

- 13 In the folktale, why does the billy goat think he has stepped in an anthill?

(A) He sees bugs crawling on him.
(B) He has been stung many times.
(C) He gets his foot stuck in a hole.
(D) He has been warned about insects.

- 14 In the folktale, who is telling the story?

(A) an ant
(B) a narrator
(C) the old man
(D) the old woman

- 15 What is the **main** problem in the folktale?

(A) An ant is tricking a billy goat.
(B) A billy goat is chasing an old man.
(C) An old woman is worried about a goat.
(D) A goat is eating the vegetables in a garden.

Reading Comprehension

- 16 Based on the folktale, which statement would the old man and woman **most likely** agree with?

- Ⓐ Many animals are helpful in a garden.
- Ⓑ Food tastes best when shared with others.
- Ⓒ Small friends can help solve big problems.
- Ⓓ Kindness can be used to solve any problem.

- 17 Read the sentence from paragraph 6 in the box below.

Then he turned and charged at the old man with his horns!

Which meaning of **charged** is used in the sentence?

- Ⓐ blamed
- Ⓑ attacked
- Ⓒ asked a price
- Ⓓ loaded with electricity

Question 18 is a short-response question. Write your answer to question 18 in the lined space below.

- 18 Based on the folktale, how does the ant show that he is clever?

**Grade 3 English Language Arts
Reading Comprehension
Spring 2010 Released Items:
Reporting Categories, Standards, and Correct Answers***

Item No.	Page No.	Reporting Category	Standard	Correct Answer (MC)*
1	10	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	13	C
2	10	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	8	D
3	11	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	8	A
4	11	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	8	B
5	11	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	13	C
6	11	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	13	B
7	12	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	13	D
8	12	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	13	A
9	12	<i>Language</i>	5	C
10	12	<i>Language</i>	5	C
11	13	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	13	
12	16	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	16	C
13	16	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	16	B
14	16	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	16	B
15	16	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	16	D
16	17	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	11	C
17	17	<i>Language</i>	4	B
18	17	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	16	

* Answers are provided here for multiple-choice items only. Sample responses and scoring guidelines for open-response and short-response items, which are indicated by the shaded cells, will be posted to the Department's website later this year.

**Grade 3 English Language Arts
Reading Comprehension
Spring 2010 Unreleased Common Items:
Reporting Categories and Standards**

Item No.	Reporting Category	Standard
19	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	13
20	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	13
21	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	13
22	<i>Language</i>	4
23	<i>Language</i>	4
24	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	13
25	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	12
26	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	8
27	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	12
28	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	15
29	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	12
30	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	12
31	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	12
32	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	12
33	<i>Language</i>	4
34	<i>Language</i>	5
35	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	12
36	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	12
37	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	14
38	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	14
39	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	8
40	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	10
41	<i>Language</i>	4